**Big Unit Question**:

To what extent should the government take responsibility for the well-being of its citizens?

**Another way to ask our question:**

How much assistance should the government provide for people in need?

**What possible disagreements cold people have in answering this question? What sides could one take if they were debating it?**

One side could say “the reason we have a government is to make sure people’s needs are provided for.”

The other side could say “it is not the government’s responsibility to provide for people’s needs. It is peoples’ responsibility to do that for themselves.”

**Topic we will be studying**: The role of the government in peoples’ lives today. The history behind how we got to where we are now.

**What role does the government currently take?**

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| --- | --- |
| Benefits – have a specific monetary value, benefit *some* people directly | Services – no specific monetary value, indirectly serve the whole public |
| * Welfare (TANF) * Food stamps (SNAP, WIC) * Medicaid (Mainecare) * Medicare * Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) * Social Security (retirement pension, disability, dependent care) * School lunch subsidies * Public housing * Housing assistance (Section 8) * Home heating assistance (LIHEAP) * General Assistance (in Maine) * Targeted education programs (e.g. Head Start) | * Military defense * Public education (K-12 schools, public colleges and universities) * Road construction and maintenance * Plowing public roads * Police * Fire department * Justice system (courts, prisons) * Postal service * Parks (National Parks, State Parks, local town parks) * Food and Drug Administration * Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Regulations: Rules set by the government that are meant to improve the well-being of the public   * Minimum wage laws * Workplace safety laws * Product safety laws * Regulations on banks that are meant to protect peoples’ savings | |

**When did the government start providing these services and benefits?**

Most of them are fairly recent, like in the last 50-70 years. Only the post office, military defense, and the justice system really go back to the founding of the country.

**How is all of this paid for?**

**Taxes** (income, property,sales), **deductions from paychecks** (like for Social Security or Medicare), some **fees** for services (like the post office)